ARMAGH BANBRIDGE CRAIGAVON DISTRICT COUNCIL	
Document Reference Number:	**GPRC/P3.0/V1.0**
Title of Policy:	**Social Media Policy for Employees**
No of Pages (including appendices):	**14**
Version:	**1**
Issue Date:	
Policy Nominated Officer:	**Claire Shields, Armagh City & District Council, Pauline Nixon-Black, Craigavon Borough Council & Sharon Harrison, Banbridge District Council**
Equality screened by:	**Claire Shields, Communications Officer Armagh City & District Council**
Equality screening date:	**13.05.15**
Amendment Version Issue Date:	
Sent out by:	
Approved by:	
Review Date:	

AMENDMENT RECORD SHEET

Remove and destroy old pages. Insert new pages as indicated.

Revision Number	Page Number	Date Revised	Description of Revision

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media is the term used for the current range of online tools, websites and interactive media that enable users to interact with each other in various ways, through sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social media involves building online communities or networks, which encourage participation, dialogue and involvement. This includes online forums such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube etc. Social media also covers other platforms including blogs, video and images etc.

2. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and all other internet postings, including other platforms such as blogs, video and images, whether specified in this policy or yet to come into being.

This policy applies to the use of social media for both working and personal purposes, whether during office hours or otherwise. This policy applies regardless of whether the social media sites are accessed using the Council's IT facilities or equipment belonging to employees.

This policy applies to all employees and other workers (including casual and agency workers, secondees and contractors) who use the Council's infrastructure and are granted access on the above grounds.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

Employees should be aware there are many more examples of social media that can be given and this is a constantly changing area. Employees should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media they are using.

The Council recognises that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on particular topics using a wide variety of social media. However employees use of social media can pose risks to the Council's reputation, confidential and proprietary information, jeopardise compliance with legal obligations or otherwise violate any Council policies.

To minimise the above risks and to ensure resources and communications systems are used for the needs of the service, the Council expects employees to adhere to this policy.

4.0 POLICY DETAIL

4.1   Responsibilities of Officers

4.1.1   The following guidelines will apply to online participation and set out the standards of behaviour expected as a representative of the Council.

1.   Be aware of and recognise your responsibilities identified in the Social Media Policy.
2.   Remember that you are personally responsible for the content you publish on any form of social media.
3.   Never give out personal details such as home address and telephone numbers. Ensure that you handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the Council's Data Protection Policies.
4.   Respect copyright, fair-use and financial disclosure laws.
5.   Social media sites are in the public domain and it is important to ensure that you are confident about the nature of the

information you publish. Permission must be sought if you wish to publish or report on meetings or discussions that are meant to be private or internal to the Council. Don't cite or reference customers, partners or suppliers without their approval.

6. Don't use insulting, offensive, sexist, sectarian or racist language or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace. Show consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory – such as politics or religion.

7. Don't download any software, shareware or freeware from any social media site, unless this has been approved and authorised by the Council.

4.1.2 Failure to comply with the guidelines could result in disciplinary action being taken (See section 12 of this policy).

5.0 INVESTIGATORY USE

It is recognised that social media can be used for investigatory purposes, such as identifying fraud, illegal events etc. It is important that employees who use social media for this purpose comply with relevant guidance and legislation.

6.0 PERSONAL USE

6.1 The Council will only permit access to social media on its computers for 30 minutes in total per day, Monday to Sunday, with the exception of some employees who require access as a requirement to carrying out their duties. Where an employee maintains a social media site related to their role they should ensure it is registered as an official council site in accordance with the Social Media Usage Policy.

6.2 The Council understands that employees may use their own computers or devices, such as laptops and hand-held devices to access social media while they are at work. Employees must limit their use of social media on their own equipment of official rest breaks such as lunch/break times.

6.3 Employees should be aware that the Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees covers issues on disclosure of information and should bear this in mind when using social media (in a personal capacity) outside of work. Employees should be aware that any reports of inappropriate activity, linking them to the Council, maybe investigated.

7.0 RESPONSIBLE PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

7.1 The following sections of the policy provide employees with common-sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely.

7.1.1 Protecting the Council's reputation:

(a) When posting on social media, there must be a clear distinction between personal and work accounts. Employees should make it clear in social media posts that they are speaking on their own behalf i.e. in a personal capacity. Staff must be aware however, that where they are identified as a council employee, they are expected to behave appropriately and in line with the Council's policies and Employee Code of Conduct. Posts should be in the first person and personal email addresses must be used when

communicating via social media. Employees are prohibited from using work email addresses to log into a personal account.

(b) Employees who use social media to portray their views on topics, even in a private or personal capacity, should exercise caution because given the nature, level and perception of their post, it may place them in breach of this policy. This applies regardless of whether or not privacy settings are applied.

(c) Employees are prohibited from posting disparaging or defamatory statements about:
- The Council,
- Its customers/ratepayers
- Its employees
- Suppliers and vendors
- Any other stakeholders and affiliates

Employees should also avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage or potentially damage the Council's reputation, even indirectly.

(d) Employees are personally responsible for what they communicate in social media. What is published might be available to be read by the 'masses' (including the Council itself, future employers and social acquaintances) for a long time. Employees should keep this in mind before posting content.

(e) If employees disclose their affiliation as an employee of the Council, any content posted must be consistent with the employee's professional standing and in line with the Code of Conduct and any relevant policies. It is advisable that employees do not disclose their place of work on social media sites.

(f) Postings about sensitive council-related topics, such as the organisation's performance are not permitted. Even if employees make it clear that such views on such topics do not represent those of the Council, such comments could still damage the Council's reputation.

(g) If employees are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, they should refrain from making the communication, or take advice from the Human Resources section.

(h) If employees see content or become aware of content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on the Council or its employees or which would potentially breach this policy, they are required to inform their line manager in the first instance in line with the relevant policy i.e. Grievance Policy, Whisleblowing Policy, Dignity at Work Policy. All employees are responsible for protecting the Council's reputation.

(i) Statements in relation to Council projects or proposals should not be posted on social media until such projects are fully approved and signed off for public disclosure in accordance with standing orders. This includes designs, specifications or matters censored as exemptions in accordance with Data Protection or Freedom of Information guidance.

(j) Tagging can be used to identify users on a photo or in a status update. Approval must be sought from the individual before posting photos, tagging or status updates, including all Council activities or events. If a request is made by an individual in relation to images or content personal to them to be removed from a social media site, even if it is considered not offensive, it must be removed immediately.

7.1.2 Respecting intellectual property and confidential information:

(a) Employees are prohibited from disclosing confidential information and intellectual property. Employees should treat confidential information and intellectual property accordingly and not do anything to jeopardise them through the use of social media.

(b) In addition, employees should avoid misappropriating or infringing the intellectual property of other Council, organisations/companies and individuals, which can create liability for the Council, as well as the individual author.

(c) Employees must not misuse logos, slogan or similar, or post any confidential or propriety information on their personal social media site(s).

(d) Caution should be used when adding contacts known through an official capacity to social media. Public perception and the Code of Conduct for Local Government employees must be considered. For example adding a business contact of a supplier organisation could be considered a conflict of interest and therefore should be considered carefully.

7.1.3 Respecting colleagues, clients, partners and suppliers:

(a) Employees must not post content that colleagues or customers/ratepayers, suppliers, vendors or partners would find offensive, including discriminatory comments, insults or obscenity.

(b) Employees should not post content related to colleagues or customers/ratepayers, suppliers, vendors or partners without their written permission.

8.0 RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER CORPORATE STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

8.1 Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any other Council policies. This Social Media Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees
- Internet Policy
- ICT Policy
- Email Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Communications Strategy
- Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults Policy
- Dignity at work Policy
- Disciplinary Policy

9.0   MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION

9.1   Management Responsibilities
Heads of Service and line managers have a duty to ensure that employees who have access to social media sites comply with the Social Media Policy and relevant guidance and do not abuse their access rights or misuse such sites. Any breaches of this policy by employees should be dealt with immediately and in accordance with Council procedures.

9.2   Implementation
This policy will be implemented with immediate effect through appropriate communication streams.

10.   MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

10.1   The Council will keep a log of all access details and will monitor the use of social media to ensure compliance with Council policies and guidelines and in support of security and criminal investigations.

10.2   The Council has the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, employees activities using Council IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities to ensure that these rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes. Monitoring will usually only be considered if concerns have been raised and it is considered necessary to investigate.

11.   REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

11.1   Any potential serious misuse of social media maybe reported to the appropriate officer/line manager or statutory body.

12.   BREACHES OF POLICY

12.1   Any breaches of this policy will be dealt with in line with the disciplinary procedure.   Serious breaches of this policy by Council employees will amount to gross misconduct and may result in dismissal. Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours or outside of working hours, and regardless of whether Council equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing a breach. Any employee suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with an investigation.

12.2   Other violations of this policy, such as breaching the Data Protection Act, could lead to fines being issued and possible criminal or civil action being taken against the Council or the individual(s) involved.

13.   LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

13.1   The following legislative provisions have a bearing, or impinge on the rationale of this policy:

- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Human Rights Act 1998

1. **EQUALITY SCREENING FORM (to be attached as an appendix to all policies)**

   Address equality issues as required.

2. **DRAFT EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND OTHER IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

   Address as appropriate.

Policy Screening Form

Policy Scoping

Policy Title: Social Media Policy for Employees

Brief Description of Policy (please attach copy if available). Please state if it is a new, existing or amended policy.

Social media is the term used for the current range of online tools, websites and interactive media that enable users to interact with each other in various ways, through sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social media involves building online communities or networks, which encourage participation, dialogue and involvement. This includes online forums such as feedback, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube etc. Social media also covers other platforms including blogs, video and images etc.

While the Council recognises that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on particular topics using a variety of social media, guidelines are required as employees use of social media can pose risks to the Council's reputation, confidential and proprietary information, jeopardise compliance with legal obligations or otherwise violate any Council policies.

Intended aims/outcomes. What is the policy trying to achieve?

-

This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and all other internet postings, including other platforms such as blogs, video and images, whether specified in this policy or yet to come into being.

This policy applies to the use of social media for both working and personal purposes, whether during office hours or otherwise. This policy applies regardless of whether the social media sites are accessed using the Council's IT facilities or equipment belonging to employees.

This policy applies to all employees and other workers (including casual and agency workers, secondees and contractors) who use the Council's infrastructure and are granted access on the above grounds.

Policy Framework

Has the policy been developed in response to statutory requirements, legal advice or on the basis of any other professional advice? Does this affect the discretion available to Council to amend the policy?

No

Are any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the policy? If so, please outline.

The policy is intended to benefit all employees regardless of equality group they fall within. The policy clearly sets out the guidelines that apply to online participation and set out the standards of behaviour expected from a representative of the Council. These guidelines include the following; • Don't use insulting, offensive, sexist, sectarian or racist language or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace. Show consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory such as politics or religion.

Who initiated or wrote the policy (if Council decision, please state). Who is responsible for implementing the policy?

Who initiated or wrote policy?	Who is responsible for implementation?
Claire Shields – Communications Officer	The Council is responsible for implementation

Are there any factors which might contribute to or detract from the implementation of the policy (e.g. financial, legislative, other)?

No

Main stakeholders in relation to the policy
Please list main stakeholders affected by the policy (e.g. staff, service users, other statutory bodies, community or voluntary sector, private sector)

Staff members, Ratepayers and general population

Are there any other policies with a bearing on this policy?   If so, please identify them and how they impact on this policy.

Social Media Usage Policy

Available Evidence

Council should ensure that its screening decisions are informed by relevant data. What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

Section 75 category	Evidence
Religious belief	N/A
Political opinion	N/A
Racial group	N/A
Age	N/A
Marital status	N/A
Sexual orientation	N/A
Men and women generally	N/A
Disability	N/A
Dependants	N/A

Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information gathered above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories in relation to this particular policy/decision?

Section 75 category	Needs, experiences and priorities
Religious belief	N/A
Political opinion	N/A
Racial group	N/A
Age	N/A
Marital status	N/A
Sexual orientation	N/A
Men and women generally	N/A
Disability	N/A
Dependants	N/A

Screening Questions

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy for each of the Section 75 categories?		
Category	Policy Impact	Level of impact (Major/minor/none)
Religious belief	There are no specific impacts on any of the equality categories	None
Political opinion		None
Racial group		None
Age		None
Marital status		None
Sexual orientation		None
Men and women generally		None
Disability		None
Dependents		None

2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 categories?

Category	If yes, provide details	If no, provide reasons
Religious belief		No
Political opinion		No
Racial group		No
Age		No
Marital status		No
Sexual orientation		No
Men and women generally		No
Disability		No
Dependents		No

3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion, or racial group?

Category	Details of Policy Impact	Level of impact (major/minor/none)
Religious belief		None
Political opinion		None
Racial group		None

4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Category	If yes, provide details	If no, provide reasons
Religious belief		No
Political opinion		No
Racial group		No

Multiple Identity

Generally speaking, people fall into more than one Section 75 category (for example: disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; young lesbian, gay and bisexual people). Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant s75 categories concerned.

No specific impacts have been identified for people with multiple identities. The policy will affect all employees regardless of what equality category they fall within.

Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006

Is there an opportunity for the policy to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

N/A

Is there an opportunity for the policy to encourage participation by disabled people in public life?

N/A

11

A: NO IMPACT IDENTIFIED ON ANY CATEGORY – EQIA UNNECESSARY

Please identify reasons for this below

This policy clearly sets out the guidelines that apply to online participation and set out the standards of behaviour expected as a representative of the Council. It is intended to benefit all employees regardless of equality group they fall within. Guidelines are provided for Officers and they set out the standards of behaviour expected from a representative of the Council. These guidelines include the following;
- Don't use insulting, offensive, sexist, sectarian or racist language or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace. Show consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory such as politics or religion.

B: MINOR IMPACT IDENTIFIED – EQIA NOT CONSIDERED NECESSARY AS IMPACT CAN BE ELIMINATED OR MITIGATED

Where the impact is likely to be minor, you should consider if the policy can be mitigated or an alternative policy introduced. If so, EQIA may not be considered necessary. You must indicate the reasons for this decision below, together with details of measures to mitigate the adverse impact or the alternative policy proposed.

C: MAJOR IMPACT IDENTIFIED – EQIA REQUIRED

If the decision is to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

12

Timetabling and Prioritising

If the policy has been screened in for equality impact assessment, please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3 with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority criterion	Rating (1-3)
Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	
Social need	
Effect on people's daily lives	

The total rating score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the council in timetabling its EQIAs.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities? If yes, please give details.

Monitoring

Effective monitoring will help the authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy. It is recommended that where a policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced to mitigate adverse impact, monitoring be undertaken on a broader basis to identify any impact (positive or adverse).

Further information on monitoring is available in the Equality Commission's guidance on monitoring

Identify how the impact of the policy is to be monitored

The Council will keep a log of all access details and will monitor the use of social media to ensure compliance with Council policies and guidelines and in support of security and criminal investigations. The policy will be reviewed in six months.

Approval and Authorisation

A copy of the screening form for each policy screened should be signed off by the senior manager responsible for that policy. The screening recommendation should be reported to the relevant Committee/Council when the policy is submitted for approval.

Screened by	Position/Job title	Date
Claire Shields	Communications Officer	13.05.15

Approved by	Position/Job Title	Date
Roger Wilson	Chief Executive	May 2015

Please forward a copy of the completed form with policy attached to either mary.hanna@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk or Stephanie.harte@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk who will ensure that screening forms and policies are available on the Council website.

These officers are also responsible for issuing reports on a quarterly basis on those policies "screened out for EQIA". This allows stakeholders who disagree with this recommendation to submit their views. In the event of any stakeholder disagreeing with the decision to screen out any policy, the screening exercise will be reviewed.